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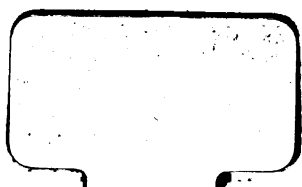
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THE NATURAL  
OR  
THE SUPERNATURAL?











**THE NATURAL**

**OR**

**THE SUPERNATURAL?**



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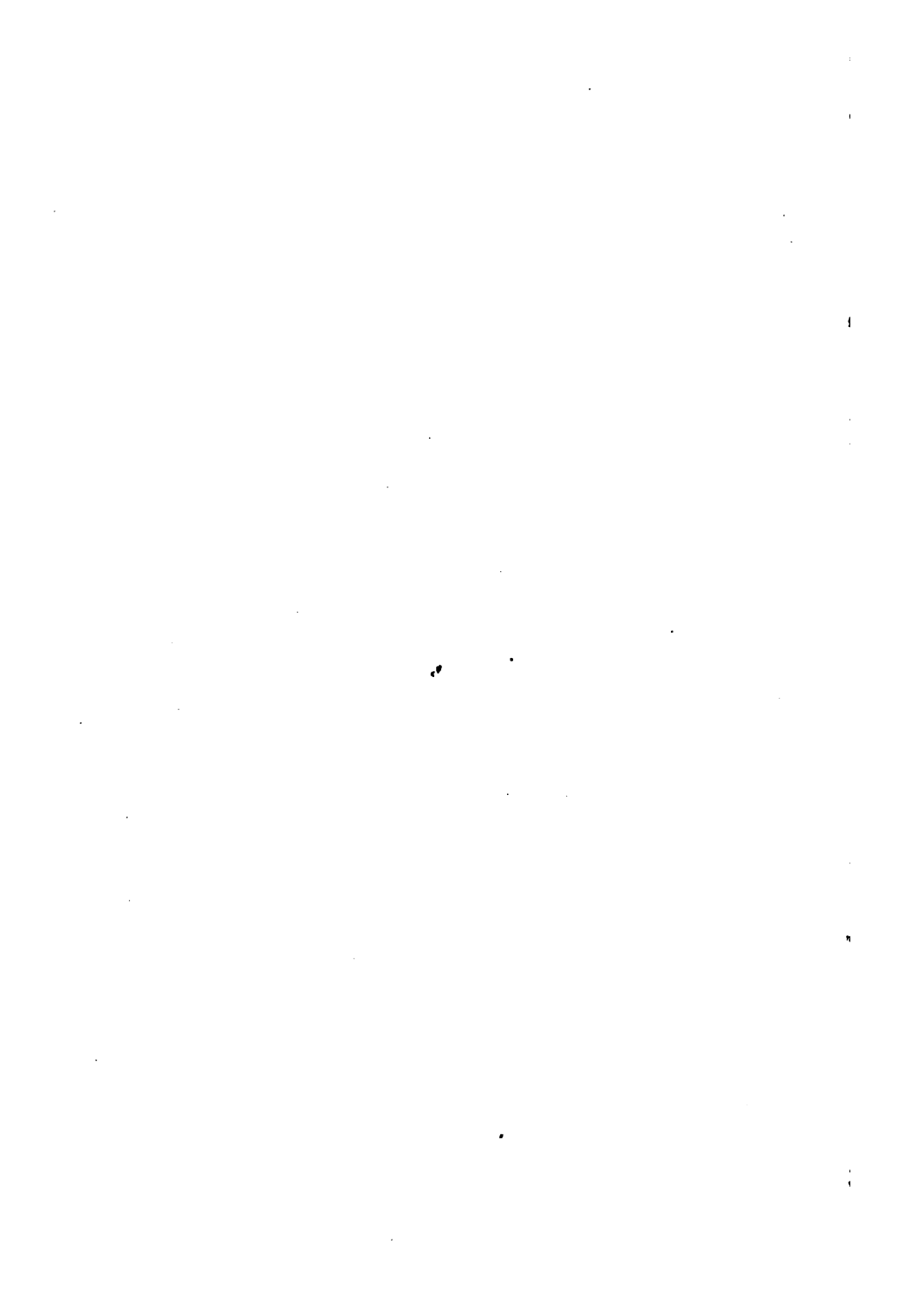
BY A LAYMAN.

I found ever during all that long time, more fruit in one  
houre's sobriety, prayer, and humble meditation, than in a  
thousand daies of curious or presumptuous inquisition.

NAPIER of Merchiston, 1611.

EDINBURGH  
EDMONSTON & DOUGLAS  
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## PREFACE.

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THE following pages are published as a plain, unpretending, yet, it is hoped, a common-sense plea, for the existence of the *supernatural* in the world's history. In most of the sceptical writings which I have read, the old argument from prophecy is either entirely evaded, or, in a few sentences, conveniently shelved, by relegating the prophetic writings to the category of myths, or by alleging that they refer exclusively to contemporaneous events, or by simply characterising them as so poetical and obscure that almost any interpretation may be given with equal propriety. On the other hand, the whole energies of the author are industriously bestowed on minute and comparatively unimportant criticism, or in plausible proofs of contradiction, or in arguments intended to disprove whatever claims to be miraculous in the Gospel narratives. It would, however, be far more to the point were such writers to attack questions relating to *undeniable and still existing facts*—such, for instance, as the present most remarkable state of the Jews, viewed in relation to the very many prophetic statements of the Bible. Are any of those writers who

treat so lightly all Scripture Prophecies as mere conjectures, willing to favour us with one of their own? If prophesying be such easy work, will none be bold enough to measure swords with Isaiah and Daniel, and tell us what Dr. M'Caul asks—the fate of Paris or London a hundred years hence?

Had I known, as I do now, the peculiar difficulties attending colloquial writing, I should not have attempted that mode of dealing with my subject. It is quite enough for any one to state his own views, without having to express those of another from whom he wholly differs. It is hard indeed to hold the scales aright in such a case. I had read dialogues in which the vantage ground seemed to be unfairly preserved for the orthodox disputant. The sceptic, on the other hand, was little better than a man of straw, set up to be knocked down, forced to assume the most untenable positions, and to forego the most obvious opportunities of reply, while the whole discussion was closed with an abject retraction by the sceptic of all his former views. I thought that this kind of error at least might be avoided. It is not for me to say to what extent I have succeeded in the attempt, but I am certainly very far from asserting that the personage designated *A* in the dialogue has had his views fully given, or that they have been expressed to the greatest advantage. I can only affirm that I have done my best to fight his battle, and am certain that I have nowhere treated him

with intentional injustice. Besides this, neither disputant has been forced to "retire vanquished," for the discussion is made to end where it began—neither party having been made to change sides.

While these sheets were passing through the press the President of the British Association, departing, as it seems to me, from the objects for which the Association was founded, intimated, from the presidential chair, his acceptance of materialistic principles. There may be a few individuals of peculiar mental constitution, such as I have referred to at page 60, who can continue to practise morality while believing in no God above them, and in no other world than the present. But is any one prepared for the general spread of such a negative creed? We have crime enough in our country as it is: What will be the result if the thirty millions of our countrymen were to throw off their belief, imperfect though it may be, in a Heavenly Father, and in a future state of rewards and punishments? Our wife-beaters and wife-murderers are low enough in the scale of morality: Will they be raised by being informed that all human beings are similar in kind to the brute creation, and that when their lives come to an end they will perish like the beasts, and their souls will be annihilated?

The answer to all this, which will no doubt be made by such philosophers (falsely so-called), is, that they must proclaim the truth, come what may. But are such views really truth? do they rest upon the

same basis as the Newtonian philosophy? or upon any intelligible basis whatever?

The restless activity of the advocates of infidelity in our day to overthrow Christianity is further evidenced by an important anonymous work which has just appeared. In two most erudite volumes, entitled *Supernatural Religion*, the whole New Testament is treated as a purely human production, abounding in worthless legends about miracles. The grand conclusion arrived at by the author is thus stated:—"We do not find any real trace even of the existence of our Gospels for *a century and a-half* after the events they record."

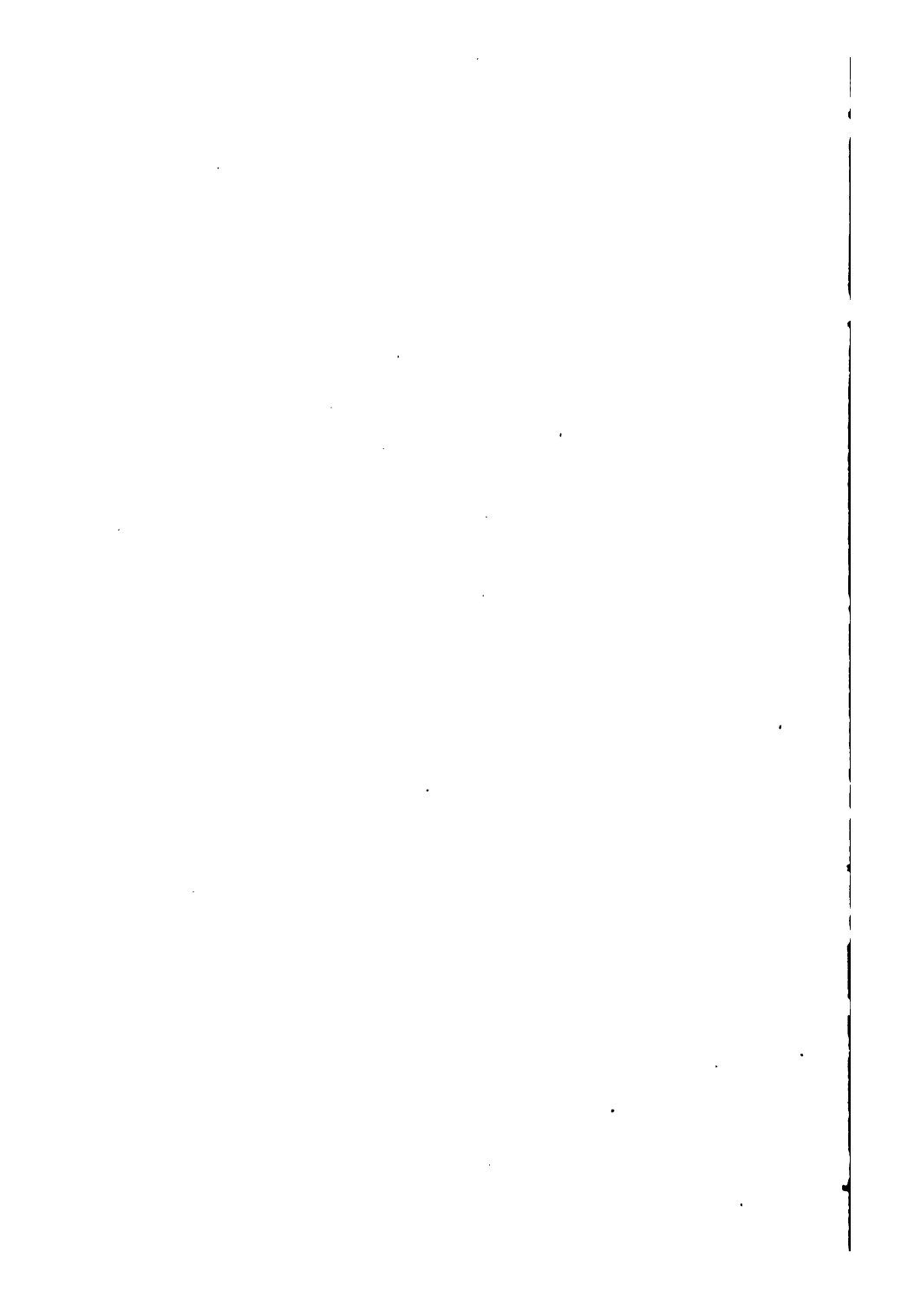
Now, if the four Gospels were not compiled till a century and a-half after Christ's death, and if the writers, in their zeal for the supernatural, inserted false legends to prove the Divinity of Christ, how could they make him utter the prediction that had (to all appearance at least) been then contradicted, of his coming in the clouds before the generation whom he addressed had passed away? Whatever may be the explanation of that prediction as recorded,—and different explanations have been given by commentators,—there can be no doubt, as Gibbon says, that the belief of the early Christians was the literal one,—that their Saviour should revisit the earth before they themselves died. Will any man out of bedlam believe that *the four different writers of these Gospels, who were anxious, above all things,*

*to prove the Divinity of Christ, were so madly blind as, a century and a-half after His time, to insert such a prediction as this, which had long before that time been (to all appearance at least) contradicted?* The argument, then, as stated at page 45 of the following pamphlet, seems to me absolutely conclusive as to the fact that our Gospels date from the generation to whom that prediction was addressed.

But irrespective of the objection now stated, I have further to express dissent from the conclusions of the author of these volumes. He shows that the early Christians did not use the exact words which are employed in our Gospels; from which he infers that they must have quoted from other earlier Gospels, which have been lost. The same argument will also disprove the authenticity of the Old Testament, for our Lord and his Apostles seldom quote the *ipsissima verba* of the Old Testament. In short, it does not seem to have been the practice in those early days to make *verbatim* quotations, but simply to give the gist of the passages to which they referred.

EDINBURGH, December 1874.





## THE NATURAL OR THE SUPERNATURAL?

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### GOD THE UNKNOWN AND UNKNOWABLE.

A. HAVE you read this review of a book called "A Plea for Tolerance"?

B. Yes, I have. The book is one of many of a similar kind that are now constantly appearing, and with which I have no sympathy whatever.

A. Why so? you surely approve of tolerance?

B. Yes; all men profess at least to approve of tolerance; but what I complain of in such books is the ungenerous way of treating the written revelation; the total forgetfulness of what Christianity has done for the world and for themselves. They have got to the top of the wall, and now they kick down the ladder by which they were alone able to attain their high level. Then they talk of God as unknowable, while they lay down the law of conforming to certain rules of morality and humanity as being incumbent on all—in short, the imperative *duty* of men and women. These men condemn the Christian faith, yet each asserts his own system as the only true one. There is, at least, no want of variety in the views that are advocated. The old saying is true—*quot homines, tot sententiæ*.

A. I do not think you are quite fair in this. All that such writers do, is to assert what cannot be questioned by any man, while they demur to the dogmas of the schools. They assert the practical humanity, while they reject the hypothetical theology. They winnow the chaff from the grain.

B. You follow their example in what you now say. You jump to conclusions without proof, while, at the same time, you adopt the same loose use of terms that they do. What is morality?—what is humanity?—what is theology?

A. Well, I grant that some definition of terms is prerequisite to any discussion on philosophical questions. What do you say to our entering fully into the subject in our conversation, and that in conducting our investigation there shall be neither temper nor partiality displayed, and that we shall proceed with the utmost caution and by purely logical steps?

B. By all means. I would suggest, then, that we inquire what duty, if any, is incumbent upon me, an individual, supposing that there is no revelation from God, either written, or communicated through our consciences, or apparent from God's works? We shall assume, I suppose, that there is a God, and say with Sir Isaac Newton in his *Principia*, "We know him only by his most wise and excellent contrivance of things and final causes;" though we will not go farther with Sir Isaac in saying, "But we reverence and adore him on account of his dominion. For we adore him as his servants, and a God without dominion, Providence, and final causes, is nothing else but fate and nature." After

having fearlessly followed out our inquiry on this head to whatever conclusion it may conduct us, let us next pursue the subject, taking along with us such knowledge of God's character as is afforded by the works of nature ; and lastly, let us contrast the results at which we have arrived with the Christian system, as deduced from the alleged written revelation contained in the Bible. Do these heads represent sufficiently the nature of our intended discussion ?

*A.* I think they do. But, before we begin, I must express the hope that both of us will be strict in eliminating every element that is in the least degree doubtful or irrelevant to the subject : there must be no "feelings," if you please—no starting back in horror from any conclusion which has been legitimately arrived at by sound logical reasoning.

*B.* Most certainly ; that is precisely what I want. I will, as resolutely as you, object to any supposed principles on which society should be built. The question is as to the duty, if there be any, of an individual member of society. I will allow no interference with this one man's rights on any pretext whatever.

*A.* Agreed. Now let us begin our discussion at once. We have sufficiently arranged our programme and the terms on which it is to be conducted. Pray take the lead.

*B.* If there be no revelation by God, either written or apparent in the world, or indicated by conscience, it is clear we know nothing of him, and can know nothing of him, and therefore he is the unknown and unknowable, and we are all left

sprawling in mid-air. I am not bound to serve him, and I cannot, since he has refused to tell me what he wants. I know of no world but this, for he has told me of no other—of no after rewards or punishments, for the same reason. Farther, I am bound to conclude either that there are none, or he would have told me of them; or if there be, that he does not wish me to know of their existence, and, therefore, that I am not expected or wished to let them in any way affect my actions. As Mr. Morley says in his Essay on Voltaire, "No answer is to be found by human effort. Whatever side we take, we can only shudder. There is nothing that we know, nothing that we have not to fear. Nature is mute, and we interrogate her in vain; the book of destiny is closed to our eyes." Are we at one as to all this?

A. Yes; we are.

B. Well, the question for me as an individual to consider is simply this, What is my *summum bonum*? How shall I secure the *optimum*; that is to say, the maximum of joy and pleasure, with the minimum of sorrow and pain? Hitherto I have been daily doing violence to many wishes and cravings of my nature out of respect to the supposed will of God—or from fear of a future day of reckoning—or out of consideration for the feelings of others. But what have I to do with God who is unknown? or future days of reckoning, of which I have no certain knowledge? What have I to do with others? I have but a short time now to live; let me eat and drink, for to-morrow I die. Let us "denounce the belief in

the invisible as the root of all human weakness and misery, and proclaim the sacred law of egotism—the religion of the flesh.”\* “Thy first duty,” as Feuerbach says, “is to do good to thyself.”† There is no law of God against murder, theft, drunkenness, or impurity. There are no laws of marriage; and if marriage were abolished, adultery, as Hume says, would soon be thought nothing of. And who has a right to prevent me committing suicide, or any other sin if I think it proper?

A. Stop; you travel much too fast. Do you not see that by an unbridled life of self-indulgence you will ruin your health—bring pain, and ultimately cut short your life?

B. I admit your objection, and will correct my statement. The question I have to consider is, how far to indulge myself as to avoid injury to my health, and to escape detection at the hands of justice. These are certainly restrictions which are essential to the *summum bonum*.

A. But I object further. Do you not see that if you are to thieve, and steal, and commit murder, so should I? Two can play at such games, so that your principle is simply absurd because suicidal.

B. Your objection may be good as regards the ultimate result; but what have I to do with ultimate results? The question, remember, has reference to myself, not to others. It depends upon the expectancy of life which I may reasonably entertain. Insurance tables of the expectancy of the duration of human life

\* *Aids to Faith, Ideology, and Subscription*, by F. C. Cook, M.A., p. 160.

† *Ibid.* p. 161.

tell me I shall probably, being now fifty-five years of age, have other seventeen years in the world. Nothing that I can do, live as I may, can possibly effect a revolution in human society. Though I may commit murders, that will not cause a general feeling of indifference to human life. I hold, therefore, that, so far as I am concerned as an individual, the *optimum* is represented by one word, and that one word is selfishness.

A. I have seldom heard anything which—pardon me for saying it—appears to me more absurd than your reasoning on this point. First of all, I defy you to commit murder. You haven't the moral courage; and though you had, the act would give you the most intense pain, to say nothing of the feeling of remorse that would ensue.

B. Pardon me. If the commission of murder would give me pain, of course I should not do the deed, because it would not be pursuing my *optimum*. Then, as to want of moral courage and after remorse these come from my Christian education, and must be thrown off on the discovery that there is no revelation; or at least thrown off as far as possible.

A. But don't you see you are trampling upon our innate sense of justice, and not fulfilling the law of your being? or, in a word, not living, as Mr. Arnold says, "as you were meant to live?" or, as Herbert Spencer calls it, not fulfilling "God's will."\*

B. I know nothing about innate senses, nor about justice. These come from education. Nor yet will

\* *Social Statics*, p. 93.

I be schooled by Mr. Arnold, Mr. Spencer, or anybody else, as to the law of my being.

A. I reply that conscience would, as an existing entity, come in and destroy your *optimum*.

B. I willingly retract. I now see the force of your objection. You plead that I cannot follow out my purely theoretic *optimum*, because conscience, to whatever source it may be due, comes in and thwarts my purpose.

A. Quite so; that is my averment, and it seems to me fatal to your whole argument.

B. I admit frankly that conscience, whether proceeding from education, heredity, or any other source, would, to a certain extent, interfere with the pursuit of my *optimum*, though it would affect others differently; as, for example, it would certainly not interfere with the pursuit of the cannibal after *his optimum*. But surely you will admit that, after the discovery that God was unknown and unknowable, my conscience would alter very much. I should, as far as possible, train my conscience to my new creed, and it would be strange if I should not succeed in clearing it of such bugbears as a future world of punishment, and the like. With the certain and speedy prospect of death before me, and in the belief that I was amenable only to what are called the claims of society as enforced by magistrates and the police, my whole life and morals would undergo a mighty revolution. Great indeed is the change of service from the God of love and the Redeemer, as revealed in the Bible, to the obedience generated by fear of the civil magistrate. The motives to obedience differ wholly in kind.



A. But do you mean to say seriously that you would be unjust to your own family?

B. No, I hardly think that possible; natural instinct would come in the way. Owen, however, in his socialistic scheme, proposed that all children should be brought up, not by their parents, but by others set aside for the special purpose of bringing up children.

A. I confess, with all your explanations, I am far from satisfied with your conclusion. You are trampling down the eternal principles of justice, and setting at naught the clearest arrangements of nature.

B. Do please to recollect that we have nothing at present to do with nature's works; these belong to the second branch of our subject. I ask this question, and I demand an explicit answer. If God be unknown and unknowable, show me the authority by which I am bound to respect justice. Am I not an absolutely free agent, and perfectly at liberty to follow out my own will,—granting, as I do, that while I am at liberty to steal from you, you are equally at liberty to steal from me?

A. My reply is a very simple one. Your principle is subversive of the welfare of society; and if of society, also of your *optimum*, for you are a member of society.

B. No; that argument may be true of my children's children, but not of me. I have already said that I cannot, in the space of seventeen years, alter the state of society by my actions alone, and that therefore, in the pursuit of my *optimum*, I am

justified in disregarding others. I again demand where I am to find any obligation to respect the principles of truth and equity. You cannot point to any authority whatever.

A. I really am most anxious to treat the subject fairly; and must just say plainly, that it seems to me to be impossible to discuss this subject while excluding the consideration of conscience. It is simply impossible.

B. You have not answered my question. I wait for your authority for saying that I am bound to respect the principles of truth and justice.

A. I have given you the only answer that is possible in the circumstances; because, as I have already explained, the subject cannot be discussed irrespective of so notable an element in the question as conscience.

B. I will take no unfair advantage, but will put this question. If, for the sake of argument, the consideration of conscience is wholly excluded, just as we have excluded the question of a revelation, is there, supposing God to be unknown and unknowable, any authority for binding me to observe the principles of truth and equity?

A. Well, if, for the sake of argument, I exclude what I take to be the principal factor in the equation, then I grant that for you, as an individual, I can produce no such authority.

B. And therefore that selfishness, modified to suit existing circumstances, is the *summum bonum* of each individual.

A. I grant it, under the reservation stated.

## GOD AS KNOWN FROM NATURE AND PROVIDENCE.

B. We shall now, if you are ready, take up the case of the individual's duty, under the light which is derived from the works of nature. I confess, however, I am not at all sure that we are bound to follow the example of God, as shown in the works of Nature or Providence.

A. I agree; but for argument's sake let the hypothesis stand.

B. Very well; we shall hold it to be so; and I remark first that I fail to see that God has any law which insures rewards or successes to the just and virtuous, or punishments and disappointments to the false and the wicked. We find that the virtuous are often the most unfortunate, while the wicked are the most prosperous. It is only in novels written for young ladies, that we find that the virtuous always triumph and the wicked fall. The noble men who go out in the lifeboat are sometimes the very men who are drowned. A really clever cheat and a well-trained unabashed liar often feather their nests most successfully. We have no authority, then, apart from written revelation, for concluding that God approves of virtue and condemns vice. Therefore, in the pursuit of our *optimum*, there seems no reason deducible from the apparent laws of God that we should pursue virtue and abjure vice. We find that God sends or permits sickness, pain, broken hearts, cancers, fevers, accidents, fires, and all kinds of miseries, by which our hospitals and lunatic asylums are filled. So that, excluding, as we

are bound to do at this part of our discussion, the doctrine of another world yet to come, where all that we see now to be bad will be eternally rectified, and where there will be no more pain and death, we are driven to the conclusion that almost everything, or at least that most things, in this world are wrong.

*A.* Pray go no farther. I see your argument, which would end in something rather too much—viz. that we, the creatures, should, in imitation of the Creator, cause pain and disease as well as joy and pleasure.

*B.* Precisely; and now we will give up as hopeless the lesson from nature, and will next take your objection about conscience, which please to state in your own way.

*A.* Stop a moment; allow me to retract a too hasty admission. Please to observe, as has been often stated, that in all these painful occurrences God is grinding out a beneficial result—that, in short, what *is*, represents the very best arrangement compatible with existing circumstances.

*B.* You had better not have gone into this. You are driving into the *questio vexata* of the origin of evil.

*A.* What I say is, that the present state of things is the best, *on the whole*, that is attainable.

*B.* Would it not be better to say you know nothing about the matter? If you or any other man can show that the arrangement, although imperfect, is the best that is possible in the present state of things, you are simply denying the omnipotence of God; and I tell you plainly that if we are to explain

the origin of evil before going farther, we may at once end our discussion. No man has ever, and no man can ever, solve that difficulty. Pray go on with conscience.

A. Well, I submit, and proceed to say that we can, though I grant to a very limited extent, and in a very imperfect manner, know God's will by our consciences. This has been shown in all ages of the world by heathen writers, who have proved themselves to be honest and also successful inquirers after truth. Look at Socrates, Plato, Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius.

B. These men were doubtless honest seekers after God, though but sickly farthing candles glimmering in the daylight as compared with the full glory of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; but I must at once meet your argument by a protest. We agreed at the outset that we were not to introduce any doubtful element as an argument. Now this element is more than doubtful. The source of all human knowledge has been, as you would express it, contaminated, or at least alleged to have been contaminated. Revelation, which is here excluded, boldly declares the whole human family to have sprung from a single pair of parents, to whom was at first communicated a knowledge of God by direct revelation; and it is only consistent with analogous history that this knowledge should have been much obliterated, just as we know that Christianity was sadly defaced and corrupted, in the course of a few centuries, by the Church of Rome, with its hellish Inquisition and false teaching, though it still preserved a knowledge

of the most important parts of its original creed. The Jews, too, were perpetually lapsing into idolatry, in spite of all their advantages. "The history of religion," says Mr. Tylor, "displays but too plainly the proneness of mankind to relapse, in spite of reformation, into the lower and darker condition of the past."\* I consider, therefore, that your argument rests upon doubtful ground, and before I can allow you to employ it I must call upon you to disprove the allegation of the Bible.

A. Pardon me. This is a novel way of conducting an argument, to ask me to prove a negative. On the contrary, I call upon you to prove the positive.

B. The fact that such an averment is the foundation-stone of the whole revelation history is sufficient to render your argument at least doubtful; but I am willing to waive this, for the present at least, and on other grounds to endeavour to shake the validity of your heathen testimony. The proofs of identity in the source of human knowledge are such as these:—The tradition of a great deluge is to be found in the most ancient writers and monuments: Berosus of Chaldæa, Hieronymus of Egypt, Plutarch, and others, are said to mention it; while similar traditions were found in the Continent of America, Asia, and the East and West Indies. Numenius, one of the most ancient philosophers, quotes the very words of Moses:†—"The Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters."

\* *Primitive Culture*. E. B. Tylor. Vol. i. p. 421. London, 1871.

† Stanley's *History of Philosophy*, p. 6. London, 1743.

The division of time into weeks is alleged to have its origin in the institution of the Sabbath, and no better explanation has been ever suggested; and any one who will read Stanley's *History of Philosophy*, or that curious book, the *Court of the Gentiles*, published in 1672,\* will find enough, and more than enough, to startle him out of conceit of the notion of diverse origins of knowledge. Among nations separated by oceans from each other we have traditions of the first pair, of the age of innocence, and then of degeneracy, as well as of the destruction of the world by a flood; while, as Max Müller states, it is at least doubtful whether all languages have not sprung from one original.† The expectation of the Messiah, or a great Deliverer, seems to have been known, from passages in Philo, Tacitus, Suetonius, Virgil, and others; and then it has at least been stated that Seneca, Epictetus, and M. Aurelius, were acquainted with the Christian truth. As to Aurelius, it seems to me very singular that a man capable of himself to attain so high a standard of morality should have been so little impressed by it as to massacre the early Christians, and it seems hardly conceivable that he should have known nothing of them except their obstinacy, of which he complained. I cannot, certainly, consent to rest so

\* *The Court of the Gentiles*. By T. Gale. Oxon, 1672.

† "Whether or not it be that all human languages have a common origin, it is certain that more than a dozen of them may be traced to the same source. . . . These languages, as known to us, are, or have been, spoken by nations widely dispersed over Asia and Europe, from Himalaya to Hecla."—*Comparative Philology*, p. 7. By Lord Neaves. Blackwood & Sons, 1870.

important a conclusion as that to which we may arrive on so suspicious a foundation as that these early heathen writers borrowed nothing from Revelation. But even although the point were ceded, how can it help us to know the character of God? for every man's conscience is different. Whom are we to follow as the true representative of Deity? —Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, or Zeno? \* I challenge you to give any satisfactory answer to this question.

A. I grant you the question is more easily put than answered, though that is often the case in matters wholly diverse from this; but my reply is simply this, that every conscience approves of justice and of truth, and disapproves of injustice and error, though in a degree proportioned to its enlightenment.

B. But whence comes the light?

A. The light is kindled by experience of the world: by a weighing of acts, and the consequences resulting from those acts.

B. No; the rudest tribes of barbarians have not succeeded in eliciting this light. It is hardly discernible, excepting in nations who have cultivated science, philosophy, or literature; and these nations have all received, or are alleged to have received, if not direct, at least reflected light from the Jews—*i.e.*, from revelation. I object to your argument, for it refers not to pure and independent sources. You have, as an old Scotch writer says, "lighted your

\* *Hæc eet enim mendaciorum natura, ut cohærere non possint.—Lactantius de Justitia.*



candle at the light of Divine revelation, and now you go about to extinguish the same."\*

A. I believe I must concede this point, as we agreed at starting that we should not rest any weight upon what was doubtful. These hard and inflexible conditions compel me to admit that there is at least a doubt whether the civilised nations, whose consciences were enlightened, did not, by tradition or otherwise, obtain their light from the Jews. I give up the point the more readily, because I feel that these restrictions will be applicable hereafter; and I fairly warn you that I shall plead them when we come to deal with the credentials of the Christian so-called revelation.

B. Well, then, we have settled that matter so far; but before taking up the subject of the written revelation, let us see that we are fully at one as to the conclusions at which we have arrived. I will state them. If God be unknown and unknowable I am left entirely to myself, and am under no restriction or commandment, and am quite at liberty to please myself and to damage my neighbours if I can profit by it. The only God which I have to follow is myself; and selfishness, including love of sympathy when such exists, is the one grand aim of my existence. My obvious game, during the short time I have to live on this earth, is to obtain the maximum of temporal enjoyment without regard to others. The present world is the scene of my operations, and it is manifestly my personal interest

\* *The Works of the Truly Pious and Learned Mr. W. Crawford, Minister of Wilton.* Vol. i. p. 49. Edin. 1748.

to gain the world by pleasing some people, deceiving others, and trampling under foot those who stand in my way.

A. I cannot allow this to pass; and perhaps the subtlest way of taking the feet from you is to ask whether there be any motive that influences mankind but selfishness, though it perhaps should belong to the next subject which we are to take up. Is not Christian morality but selfishness after all, though of a sublimer nature than that which you have now described? Is not the golden rule, "Do unto others as you would have others do to you," but selfishness after all? for if universally practised you would secure that others should do to you as you do to them.

B. You labour under a fallacy by omitting what is the mainspring of Christian morality—namely, the motive, which is love to our neighbour and obedience to God's laws. The end which the Christian moralist has in view is not to benefit others in order that others may benefit him in return. It is easy to quibble—pardon me for the term—as to what is meant by selfishness and what is meant by self-denial, but it is a mere subterfuge. It may, I grant, be argued that when a ship is sinking and a husband gives up his lifebelt to his wife, he is only, after all, pleasing himself. It cannot be disputed that in this case he is following the golden rule without hope of return, for his wife can never repay the debt, having no lifebelt to give in exchange; but it may, perhaps, by a wretched quibble, be alleged that, after all, he pleases himself, because he would rather have

his wife survive than that he should survive her. It is hardly worth contrasting worldly selfishness with such sublime selfishness as this, if such it must be called, for the object of the first is self-benefit, while that of the other is a pure and holy love for his wife, resulting in self-injury. The one is earthly and sensual; the other is pure, elevated, and noble. In order, however, to facilitate our inquiry, I am willing to put it thus:—the worldly selfishness is sordid and contemptible, while the Christian selfishness and that of the husband saving his wife is sublime and noble. Besides, really good Christian work must be, not a pleasing of ourselves at all, but a sacrifice *done against the grain*, and arising from a pure motive. Do you not realise the difference?

A. I do realise the difference, but I assert that you will find the same noble self-sacrificing spirit in those who do not recognise Christianity.

B. I grant that cases may be adduced of self-sacrifice among nations unenlightened directly by Christianity. But most of such cases resulted from strong family or other worldly ties. And surely you will admit that the same spirit of self-sacrifice has been exhibited where there are no worldly ties; as, for example, in the noble army of martyrs and confessors, who gave up their lives not from any such motives, but simply from the inducement to witness a good confession for abstract principles. Their name is legion who have thus given up their lives;—those among rich and poor, learned and unlearned, dating from Christ, and the others who suffered in the days of Pliny, down to our own Scottish Cove-

nanters,—all of whom might have saved their lives by a single word of retraction.

A. You omit all the heroes on my side, while you drag in those on yours ; and you forget the many martyrs among those professing the heathen religions.

B. As to martyrs in other religions, such will not avail you, for it is enough for me that it was for religion, whether true or false, that they suffered, and I hold all such religions to be only the dregs of the first revelation to Adam. I am not now comparing one religion with another, but contrasting revealed religion with what you would call congenital natural morality. Now, although I were to allow you any number of such independent moralists, I view them as *foolish* rather than wise ; for the unselfishness of the world is sheer folly unless undertaken in the hope of reciprocity from those who are benefited thereby. The only rational act of worldly unselfishness, then, is that from which an immediate return is expected ; so that the unselfishness of the world, exercised in order that it may be reflected on ourselves,—though disguised, is neither more nor less than selfishness, pure and simple—in short, a good investment of capital. It is no better, though less disguised, than the unselfishness of a man, who, in order to impress favourably some one from whom he hopes promotion, gives an alms to a poor man in sight of his patron, hoping by the expenditure of a shilling to get a hundredfold return for his money. The motive is bad, or at least low. How different this from the unworldly selfishness of Christianity ! “ When thou makest a feast, call the poor,

the maimed, the lame, the blind, and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee, for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." "If ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again." "When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." Take for example the case of Howard, the Christian philanthropist. Instead of being the man who, of all others, should be commended by a grateful world, I do not hesitate to affirm that, apart from what revelation teaches us, and supposing that he did not act from love of sympathy, but from a sense of duty, he was a fool. He had only one life, and yet, instead of prolonging that short life, which was all that he had, and enjoying himself in some one, or in many, of the pleasures of the world, he was foolish enough to go among the poor and the sick prisoners, thereby jeopardising his ALL among fever patients! And so it ended, for he caught infection and lost ALL! But was it so? Was the only motive that urged him on in this world the mere desire to benefit humanity? If it were so, we who have come after him certainly cannot complain, but, as men of common sense, we must consider him a lunatic—neither more nor less; for whatever *we* may have gained, *he* gained nothing, but lost his ALL.

But what if his delusion were no delusion? and that, though his body was destroyed, his soul was saved, and passed at once into the heavens, heralded by that best of all commendations—"Well done,

good and faithful servant"? Yes, while he is a madman who enters the fever ward leaving revelation behind, he is the wisest of all who goes trusting in his Saviour; for death cannot hurt him, but is only a change from a world of sin, suffering, and misery, to the mansions of the blessed. Hence our expectation that few infidels who realise the risk will give their lives to relieving the sick poor, is shown to be reasonable by statistics. For who are they of whom it can be said "I was sick, and in prison, and ye visited me"? To whom are we indebted for our soup-kitchens, our ragged schools, our hospitals, our charities, missions among the poor, and missions among heathens and savages? Who are they who have lost their lives in such noble work?—Not your speculative philosophical materialists—the world has been little the better for them—but your Howards and other Christian missionaries at home and abroad.

How, indeed, can it be expected that those who have no religious convictions should be as ready to risk their lives as those who have? Carlyle asserts that "God-fearing armies are the best armies." And Mr. Bagehot says, "Before his (Carlyle's) time people laughed at Cromwell's saying, 'Trust in God, and keep your powder dry.' But we now know that the trust was of as much use as the powder, if not of more."\*

A. I grant you that a man who has a well-grounded trust in God and belief in a blessed immortality should have fewer scruples about risking

\* *Physics and Politics*, by Walter Bagehot, p. 76. Lond. 1872.

his life than the pure materialist; but I am not necessarily bound to go in for pure materialism. Men may have a trust in God without believing the Bible, and ——

*B.* Stop! I will not allow you to open again doors which we have already shut. We established the fact that without the written revelation God is unknown and unknowable, and that no trust can be placed in him, or in what Nature has shown of his dealings with mankind.

*A.* Well, then, I can at least say that many men, from a pure love to others, and sense of duty, find pleasure in risking their lives in the cause of others.

*B.* I positively object to your argument, and assert that such men in all ages may, and in the present age must, be more or less influenced by the humanising tendency of revealed religion. You forget that you failed to put forward a single example of a pure benevolent savage, who could be shown to have had no reflected light from revelation.

*A.* Then it just comes to this, that whenever I adduce what is good, from any quarter whatever, I am relegated to revelation?

*B.* Most certainly. As to the very few and very imperfect moral examples which heathendom produces I have shown the impossibility of proving that their light, such as it was, was of their own kindling. And is not this probability true? for since the New Testament was finished you cannot, midst all the clamour of tongues and activity of pens of your champions, point to anything that is new and of value in morals which they have taught us. It is

all very well for a man now-a-days to preach morality, but where did he learn it? After Newton it is easy to prate about science, but it is they only who have added to the knowledge which Newton left us, that deserve the name of philosophers. We search in vain for those who in ethics have added to the great Christian system.

Mr. Tylor, who, though an advocate for the development-system as opposed to that of degeneration, remarks—"Periodical examinations of low races, otherwise left isolated to work out their own destinies, would be interesting evidence to the student of civilisation if they could be made; but, unfortunately, they cannot." Again, Mr. Tylor asks,—*"Are there, or have there been, men so low in culture as to have no religious conceptions whatever?"* This is practically the question of the universality of religion, which for so many centuries has been affirmed and denied with a confidence in striking contrast to the imperfect evidence on which both affirmation and denial have been based. Ethnographers, if looking to a theory of development to explain civilisation, and regarding its successive stages as arising one from another, would receive with peculiar interest accounts of tribes devoid of all religion. Here, they would naturally say, are men who have no religion, because their forefathers had none—men who represent a præ-religious condition of the human race, out of which in the course of time religious conditions have arisen. It does not, however, seem advisable to start from this ground in an investigation of religious development.



Though the theoretical niche is ready and convenient, the actual statue to fill it is not forthcoming. The case is, in some degree, similar to that of the tribes asserted to exist without language, or without the use of fire; nothing in the nature of things seems to forbid the possibility of such existence, but, as a matter of fact, the tribes are not found. Thus the assertion that rude non-religious tribes have been known in actual existence, though in theory possible and perhaps true, does not at present rest on that sufficient proof, which for an exceptional state of things we are entitled to demand." \*

A. This is all very specious, but the religions referred to by Mr. Tylor have no resemblance to Judaism. You forget that in the same book he says—"There is no reason to think that this belief (the doctrine of souls) was learnt by savage tribes from contact with higher races, nor that it is a relic of higher culture from which the savage tribes have degenerated, for what is here treated as the primitive Animistic theory is thoroughly at home among savages, who appear to hold it on the very evidence of their senses, interpreted on the biological theory which seems to them most reasonable. We may now and then hear the savage doctrines and practices concerning souls claimed as relics of a higher religious culture pervading the primeval race of men. They are said to be traces of remote ancestral religion, kept up in scanty and perverted memory by tribes degraded from a nobler state. It is easy to see that such an explanation of some few facts sundered from

\* *Primitive Culture*, vol. i. pp. 35, 378.

their connection with the general array may seem plausible to certain minds, but a large view of the subject can hardly leave such argument in possession. The animism of savages stands for and by itself; it explains its own origin."\*

B. I willingly allow that any opinion of Mr. Tylor on such a subject is entitled to the highest respect, but in matters of opinion men must be allowed to differ, and on this question the quotation you have given proves that they do. While you have quoted Tylor's *opinions*, I have restricted myself to his *facts*, and I am quite content to let the matter rest there.

#### GOD AS REVEALED IN THE SCRIPTURES.

B. We will now proceed to test the revelation contained in the written Word.

Whether the books of the Old Testament be the oldest literature of the world or not, it has, in so far as I know, never been disputed that they are of very high antiquity; and when Jerusalem was taken by the Romans, Josephus mentions that a copy was taken by Titus from the temple, and carried in triumph to Rome, and laid up with the purple veil in the royal palace of Vespasian.† No one will deny that the Old Testament as now held by the Jews was in their possession before the destruction of Jerusalem. There is greater certainty as to this than there is of any alleged fact of antiquity. It is within the verge of possibility that there never

\* *Primitive Culture*, vol. i. p. 451.

† Joseph. *de Bell. Jud.*, lib. vii. cap. 7.

was such a man as Julius Cæsar, but from the Jews having without any break continued to this day in possession of their Bible, and in the performance of rites contained in it, we are certain that it is at any rate older than the date of the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, in the reign of the Emperor Vespasian. The Jews and the Samaritans (who sprang from the marriages of Jews with heathens) alike venerated the Pentateuch, although they mortally hated and opposed each other. It cannot be supposed that if either of these had corrupted their Bible the other would not gladly have exposed their falseness to the book which in common they venerated. The Old Testament was translated into Greek in the reign of Alexander the Great, more than 260 years before Christ. Do you admit all this?

*A.* I do. How old the books of the Old Testament may be, or whether truthful or not, I do not now say, but I agree to their being older than the date of the Emperor Vespasian.

*B.* This much being admitted, I must now tax your patience a little, for I have come to what I regard as one of the main pillars of my belief—viz. the prediction of the present state of the Jews. I shall quote certain passages from the Old Testament or Jews' Bible. But, before doing so, I wish to know whether you admit that the Jews universally believe that it is predicted by the Old Testament prophets that a time is yet to come when the Jewish nation is to be restored, or, as it is called, "brought in," and that they are again to be assembled at Jerusalem?

A. I believe that such predictions exist in the Old Testament; but for what purpose you ask the question I fail to discover, for I confidently assert that there are not the faintest traces discernible of any such prophecy being fulfilled. Your Jewish missions are about the lamest things going. The few who do profess conversion from the old path are generally anything but a source of credit to Christianity.

B. Well, be it so. All that I want from you is to admit the fact that the restoration and gathering together of the whole Jewish nation has been predicted, however far off the fulfilment of such a prediction may appear to be. My object in asking this admission I will show you afterwards. I have now to beg of you to exercise a little patience and attention to those passages which relate to the dispersion of that extraordinary people.

### *Dispersion of Jews.*

EZEK. VI. 8.—Yet will I leave *a remnant*, that ye may have some that shall escape the sword *among the nations, when ye shall be scattered through the countries.*

HOSEA IX. 17.—*They shall be wanderers among the nations.*

AMOS IX. 9.—For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel *among all nations*, like as corn is sifted in a sieve.

AMOS VIII. 12.—*They shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east*, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it.

OBAD. 2.—Behold, I have made thee small *among the heathen : thou art greatly despised.*

ZECH. II. 6.—*I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven.*

JER. XLVI. 28.—*I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee : but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure ; yet will I not utterly cut thee off.*

JER. XXIV. 9.—I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them.

EZEK. XII. 15.—And they shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall scatter them among the nations, and disperse them in the countries.

ZECH. X. 9.—I will sow them among the people, and they shall remember me in far countries; and they shall live with their children, and turn again.

LEV. XXVI. 33.—I will scatter you among the heathen . . . your land shall be desolate.

DEUT. XXVIII. 37.—Thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the Lord shall lead thee.

JER. XLIX. 15.—I will make thee small among the heathen, and despised among men.

DEUT. XXVIII. 25.—Thou shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth.

JER. IX. 16.—I will scatter them also among the heathen, whom neither they nor their fathers have known.

HOSEA III. 4.—For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim.

DAN. IX. 26.—And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. . . . And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.

DAN. XI. 31.—And they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice.

ZECH. XIV. 1.—Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken.

EZEK. V. 10.—The whole remnant of thee will I scatter into all the winds.

EZEK. XXXVII. 21.—Behold I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side.

JOEL I. 9.—The meat-offering and the drink-offering is cut off from the house of the Lord; the priests, the Lord's ministers, mourn.

B. It is obvious from these and very many other similar passages, that it was predicted of the Jews that they should be scattered among all the nations of the world, though they should still continue a separate nation, and should become a byword and a reproach in every nation in which they lived; that their land should become desolate, and pass into the

hands of strangers, while they themselves should have neither temple, nor priest, nor sacrifice, though still continuing to remember God in every country where they were to be sent. Yet amid all the chances of war they were, as the Dean of Canterbury says, "to bear a charmed existence."

Now, every child knows that they have been so dispersed, and become a byword. Dr. Keith calls them "citizens of the world without a country," \* and adds, that "towards them alone one of the noblest charters of liberty on earth—Magna Charta—the Briton's boast, legalised an act of injustice."† There is not, I believe, a single country under heaven which can boast of any civilisation or commerce, where the Jews are not found; and yet they do not intermarry, or even mingle with the people among whom their lot has been cast. As to the worship of the Jews in the present day, let it speak for itself. I quote from the Jewish prayer-book published at London, as read in their synagogues :‡—"Sovereign of the Universe! whilst the holy temple was established, if a man sinned he brought an offering, and made an atonement for himself; but now, because of our iniquities, *we have neither sanctuary, nor altar, nor offering, nor priest, to atone for us; there is nothing left but the commemoration of them.* O may that be our expiation,

\* *Evidence of the Truth of the Christian Religion*, p. 75. By A. Keith, D.D. Lond. 1859.

† *Ibid.* p. 81.

‡ "The Form of Daily Prayers, according to the Custom of the German and Polish Jews, as read in their Synagogues and used in their Families. Carefully revised by Isaac L. Lyon, Professor and Teacher of the Hebrew Language," p. 9. London, H. Abrahams, A.M. 5619.

and we will render the prayers of our lips instead of offerings!" . . .

P. 12.—"Let it be willed before thy presence, O Lord our God, and the God of our fathers, that the holy temple may be rebuilt speedily, in our days." P. 52.—"I believe with a perfect faith that the Messiah will come; and although his coming be delayed, I will still patiently await his speedy appearance." P. 59.—"On the right hand and on the left wilt thou be extended, and the Eternal wilt thou revere, through the means of a man the descendant of Phares will we rejoice and be glad." "In the Liturgy of the Day of Atonement," says Dr. M'Caul, "is found the following remarkable passage, which is given from David Levi's edition of the Synagogue Service Books, and in his translation:—'Before He created anything He established His dwelling (the Temple), and Yinnon (the Messiah). Our righteous anointed is departed from us, and we have none to justify. He hath borne the yoke of our iniquities and of our transgressions, and is wounded because of our transgression. He beareth our sins on His shoulder, that He may first pardon our iniquities. We shall be healed by His wound at the time that the Eternal will create him (the Messiah) as a new creature.'"\*

Now, I say that there is here prophecy obviously fulfilled before our eyes; and even in this very month a letter has been published in the newspapers,<sup>†</sup> addressed to Sir Moses Montefiore, Bart.,

\* *Aids to Faith*, p. 128.

† *Scotsman* newspaper, Tuesday, May 26, 1874.

from the representatives of Jewish congregations in Jerusalem, asking aid during the present famine in the Holy Land, in which they say, "*We are become a reproach to our neighbours.*"

I shall be glad to hear from you why we are not to admit all this as a fulfilment of prophecy.

A. I grant you it is a curious coincidence, and, if you will, a very remarkable coincidence; but farther I could not go.

B. I ask you to produce to me, from the whole history of the human race, anything in the least degree to compare with it. Is it not, as Mr. Bagehot says of the progressive amelioration of the Jewish church, "contrary to a thousand analogies"? or, as Mr. Tylor expresses it,—"*The great Syro-Phœnician kingdoms and religions have long since passed away into darkness, leaving but antiquarian relics to vouch for their former might. Far other has been the history of their Jewish kindred, still standing fast to their ancient nationality, still upholding to this day their Patriarchal religion in the midst of nations who inherit from the faith of Israel the belief in one God, highest, Almighty, who in the beginning made the heaven and the earth, whose throne is established of old, who is from everlasting to everlasting.*" \* Can you match this phenomenon?

A. No; I don't think I can. But still, there is nothing actually impossible in its being simply fortuitous.

B. Nor is there anything impossible in a miracle.

\* *Primitive Culture*, by E. B. Tylor. Vol. ii. p. 322. Lond. 1871.



If your mind had not been preoccupied with an unwillingness to admit the notion of prophecy, would you not have granted that the facts could have been the result of miraculous power only?

A. Now you are usurping functions to which you have no title whatever. Judge not the motives of others, as your own Master has taught.

B. Well, surely you will go thus far, that the facts are at least *hardly* explicable on any other hypothesis than that of supernatural revelation.

A. I allow that you have scored a point, and will go the length of saying that the presumption is in favour of your view; but I can go no farther. I think it more consistent with reason to attribute it to an accidental coincidence of events.

B. I will give you then another prophecy from the same ancient records:—

### *Predictions of the Messiah.*

GEN. XLIX. 10.—The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, *until Shiloh come : And unto him shall the gathering of the people be.*

ISA. IX. 6.—For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given : and the government shall be upon his shoulder : and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.

ZECH. IX. 9.—Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion ; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem ; *behold, thy King cometh unto thee : He is just, and having salvation ; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass.*

MAL. IV. 2.—But unto you that fear my name, *shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.*

GEN. XXII. 18.—*In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.*

PS. LXXII. 7. In his days shall the righteous flourish. Ver. 17. *His name shall endure for ever : His name shall be continued as long as the sun, and men shall be blessed in him. All nations shall call him blessed.*

ISA. XL. 5.—*The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.*

ISA. IX. 1.—*In Galilee of the nations, the people that walked in darkness have seen a great light.*

PS. LXXXIX. 27.—*I will make Him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth.*

DAN. VII. 13.—*I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.*

MICAH V. 2.—*But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.*

ZECH. XIII. 1.—*In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.*

ZECH. XIII. 7.—*Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.*

MAL. III. 1.—*Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.*

ISA. XL. 10.—*In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.*

ISA. LIX. 20.—*The Redeemer shall come to Zion.*

JER. XXIII. 5, 6.—*I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper. . . . And this is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness.*

ISA. LIII. — (The whole of this chapter, beginning "Who hath believed our report?" contains the most minute account of the suffering Saviour and the object of his mission, but it is so well known as not to require being quoted.)

A. I have waited with most exemplary patience, and must now at once say that the prophetic language is always so hazy and indistinct that it is no difficult matter to attach very different meanings to it. In this way after-events are made out to have been predicted, whereas the references may have

been to other and very different matters. Besides, you forget that, according to a recent French writer, the true translation of the celebrated passage in Genesis, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," is very different from ours, and, in point of fact, the passage is not of a prophetic character at all.

B. I do not value a straw the criticism to which you allude; for, as Dr. M'Caul \* says,—“He must indeed be a man that leans to his own understanding who can lightly esteem the judgment of the ancient Jewish Church, and the common assent of all Christian scholars for nearly 1800 years.” It is sufficient for the argument, that through these writings, as explained by the Jews living at the time, the belief was generated that a series of events were then to take place; and if those events did at that time occur, I am warranted in pleading that the writings were prophetic. Even were I to grant that the translation of the passage in Genesis is wrong, what do you make of all the others? We know that, at the time of Christ, the Jews interpreted these passages as predicting the coming of the Messiah, under whose temporal reign the Jewish nation were to be glorious, and in the ascendancy over the whole earth; and the knowledge of this prediction spread among the Romans. Apart, therefore, altogether from Jewish testimony, I clinch my argument with what you dare not dispute—viz. the belief in this prophecy as proved from the classical writings.

\* *Aids to Faith*, p. 129. Lond. J. Murray, 1870.

"Forty years before the birth of Christ," says the sceptical Gibbon, in reference to the conversion of the Emperor Constantine, "the Mantuan bard, as if inspired by the celestial muse of Isaiah, had celebrated with all the pomp of Oriental metaphor the return of the Virgin; the fall of the serpent; the approaching birth of a god-like child, the offspring of the great Jupiter, who should expiate the guilt of humankind, and govern the peaceful universe with the virtues of his Father; the rise and appearance of a heavenly race—a primitive nation—throughout the world; and the gradual restoration of the innocence and felicity of the golden age. The poet was perhaps unconscious of the secret sense and object of these sublime predictions, which have been so unworthily applied to the infant son of a consul or a triumvir; but if a more splendid and indeed specious interpretation of the fourth Eclogue contributed to the conversion of the first Christian emperor, Virgil may deserve to be ranked among the most successful missionaries of the Gospel." Gibbon refers to another source of evidence which deeply impressed the Emperor Constantine (*Constant. Orat. ad Sanctos*, c. 19, 20):—"He" (the emperor) "chiefly depends on a mysterious acrostic composed in the sixth age after the deluge by the Erythræan Sibyl, and translated by Cicero into Latin. The initial letters of the *thirty-four* Greek verses form this prophetic sentence: JESUS CHRIST, SON OF GOD, SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD."\*

\* *Gibbon*, vol. i. p. 552. Lond. Warne & Co.

Suetonius and Tacitus clearly state the general expectation of the coming Messiah in the following passages :—

“A firm persuasion had long prevailed through all the East that it was fated for the empire of the world at that time to devolve on some one who should go forth from Judæa.”—Suetonius, *Vit. Vesp.* sect. 4.

“The majority were deeply impressed with a persuasion that it was contained in the ancient writings of the priests, that it would come to pass at that very time that the East would renew its strength, and that they that should go forth from Judæa should be rulers of the world.”—Tacitus, lib. v. c. 15.

I must now bring a serious charge against you. You admitted that the Jews were right in believing that their ancient records contained a prediction not yet fulfilled of the final restoration and gathering together of the Jews, but now you deny the application of equally clear prophecies which have been fulfilled. In other words, so long as a prediction remains unfulfilled you find no difficulty in understanding it; but whenever events fulfil the prediction, the words then seem susceptible of some other meaning!

A. I have only to say that I am not to be held as admitting the accuracy of these statements. You agreed we were not to admit anything that was in the least doubtful, and you have once already stopped my mouth by reference to this condition. Indeed, I ought to have guarded myself in the same way when you gave your other lengthy extracts from the Old Testament, the purity of which I defy you

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to prove. Besides, you have not the learning to enable you to interpret the language employed in these writings.

*B.* I grant you frankly the truth of your averment as to my ignorance of the original, but I shelter myself under the opinion of one who has a right to be heard,—viz. Dr. M'Caul, who, remember, was Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament Exegesis in King's College. He says,\* "A correct idea of the Prophet's work and office, and of the nature of prophecy in general, may be obtained from any ordinary translation of the Old Testament by any intelligent reader. . . . No reader of the authorised version ought to allow himself to be mystified or silenced by an appeal to foreign critics, much less to be disturbed in his faith, as if he could not apprehend the general teaching of the Bible without profound knowledge of the Semitic dialects and the latest results of German criticism." "That which suggests itself to the common sense of mankind as the meaning, whether derived from version or original, is undoubtedly the true meaning. And so it is with prophecy. To readers of ancient or modern versions, or of the original, the general scope and intent has ever appeared the same."

And surely you cannot object when I bring forward either the testimony of those who are neutral and indifferent to the question, or still better, of those who are hostile, and who deny that any such prediction was intended. A most valuable part of our testimony to the truth of Christianity—viz. that

\* *Aids to Faith*, pp. 82, 111. Lond. John Murray, 1870.

afforded by prediction—has not been handed down to us by friends to the cause, nor even by those who were indifferent, but by the Jews, who, as Gibbon says, had “the most implacable hatred of the Christian name,” and who, though to this day they reject him, still receive and preserve those very records which he declared contained the predictions of his advent. *Had the Jews accepted his Gospel, our testimony to its truth, though still strong, would not have been a tithe of what it really is.* How gladly and how effectively would the enemies of Christ in our days have contended that the keepers of those Old Testament predictions, being partizans in his cause, had corrupted the original, and had interpolated prophetical announcements! But this door of attack has been effectually, and I believe providentially, barred and bolted against them. In short, it is a strange fact, which is perhaps too little thought of, *that the rejection of Christ by the Jews was for us, who live in these days, a condition absolutely essential and indispensable to the full evidence of the Gospel history.*

A. But why should I be expected to believe that these passages really refer to Christ, when, on your own showing, the parties who ought best to understand their own records have rejected Christ as their Messiah?

B. Thanks for your suggestion. You have added another argument which I might perhaps have lost sight of. What, if this—to us altogether inconceivable blindness on the part of the Jews should have been, as it really was, specially and pointedly pre-

dicted also? It is surely an almost miraculous thing that the Jews should be still looking for, and, as we have before seen, still praying for, the coming of their Messiah, when he has already received, as I shall afterwards show, the adherence of the greatest number of people of any creed in the world! Even in their best times the Jews never had such a wide dominion as Christ, who is received wherever real civilisation exists. We can conceive people rejecting Christ who also reject the Old Testament; but is it not simply miraculous that any one who believes in the inspiration of the Old Testament prophets, and that they prophesied of a Messiah to come, should not believe that Christ, who was one of themselves, —a Jew of the tribe of Judah—was the Messiah of promise, and who, it is admitted, came at the very time when other nations besides the Jews expected he should? Father Hyacinthe well says, that in the face of opposing logic and history, “the waiting for Messiah is the grandest and wildest perseverance that the world ever saw.”\* Yes, it would be incredible but for the following and other similar passages in the Old Testament prophets which predict their blindness:—

PS. CXVIII. 22.—The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.

ISA. VIII. 14.—He shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

ISA. XLIX. 5.—And now, saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, *though Israel be not gathered*, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord.

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\* *The Family and the Church*, p. 224. New York, 1870.



**MAL. I. 10.**—*I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand ; for from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles ; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering : for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye have profaned it, etc.*

**JER. XII. 7.**—*I have forsaken mine house, I have left mine heritage ; I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies.*

**ISA. LIII. 1.**—*Who hath believed our report ? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed ? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground : he hath no form nor comeliness ; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men ; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief : and we hid as it were our faces from him ; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows : yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.*

**ISA. VI. 10.**—*Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes ; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. Then said I, Lord, how long ? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, and the Lord have removed men far away.*

**ISA. XXIX. 10.**—*For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes : the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered. And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed.*

**ISA. XXIX. 13.**—*Behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder : for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.*

**MATT. XXI. 43.**—*The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.*

**ISA. LXV. 1.**—*I am sought of them that asked not for me ; I am found of them that sought me not : I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name. I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people. Ver. 15. God shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name.*

**DEUT. XXVIII. 28.**—*The Lord shall smite thee with madness, and blindness.*

**ISA. XLIX. 6.**—*I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth. Thus saith the Lord . . . to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth.*

But now let me go back to the predictions as to the advent of the Messiah. I have to state that it

is admitted by heathen historians that there was such a personage as Jesus Christ, and that he was put to death by Pontius Pilate, so that his existence rests on heathen as well as Scriptural authority. Lucan, who died A.D. 180, writes that Christ was crucified, and was the founder of Christianity in Palestine. Tacitus (A.D. 110) also says "Chrestus, the founder of that name (the Christian), was put to death as a criminal by Pontius Pilate, proconsul of Judæa, in the reign of Tiberius." "The most sceptical criticism," says Gibbon, the celebrated enemy of Christianity, "is obliged to respect the truth of this extraordinary fact, and the integrity of this celebrated passage of Tacitus" (referring to the whole statement from which the above is a quotation). "The former is confirmed by the diligent and accurate Suetonius, who mentions the punishment which Nero inflicted upon the Christians. The latter may be proved by the consent of the most ancient MSS., by the irreproachable character of Tacitus, by his reputation, which guarded his text from the interpolations of pious fraud, and by the purport of his narration" (Gibbon, *Hist.* vol. ii. p. 497).

Pliny (A.D. 107) testified to the number of Christians whom he persecuted, and said that the heathen temples were "almost forsaken." Celsus (A.D. 176), the bitter enemy of Christ, says of him, "It is but a few years ago since he delivered this doctrine, who is now reckoned by the Christians to be the Son of God." Celsus also boasts of being able "to tell many things concerning the affairs of Christ Jesus, and those, too, true, different from those written

by the disciples of Jesus. But I purposely omit them." Again, he speaks of Jesus who—"taking to himself ten or twelve abjects, vile publicans and sailors (or boatmen),—went about with them, getting his subsistence in a base and shameful manner."

Finally, as regards Celsus, Lardner tells us, "we have in Celsus, in a manner, the whole history of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels, for we have traced in him the history of our Lord's birth, life, preaching, miracles, death, and resurrection—all as taken by him from the writings of Christ's own disciples" (Lardner, vol. vii. p. 238). Porphyry, another strong opponent of Christianity, who wrote between A.D. 250-300, says, "Since Jesus has been honoured none have received any benefit from the gods."

Hierocles, who wrote A.D. 303, mentions Peter and Paul by name, and casts reflections upon them; and, though never once denying our Lord's miracles, ascribed them to the exercise of magical power.

Next I adduce Josephus, who wrote his History of the Jewish Nation A.D. ———

*A.* I have quietly submitted to listen to much that in strictness I think I might have objected to. You have now, however, outrun the constable, for the passage which you are about to quote from Josephus is spurious, or is at least alleged to be so, and therefore I protest against your using it.

*B.* I admit that such an insinuation has been made against the passage, therefore I must submit, and pass over the great Jewish historian; and so I will go on to

*The Destruction of Jerusalem.*

DEUT. XXVIII. 49-57.—The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth ; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand ; a nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favour to the young : and he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed : which also shall not leave thee either corn, wine, or oil, or the increase of thy kine, or flocks of thy sheep, until he have destroyed thee. And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst, throughout all thy land : and he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, throughout all thy land, which the Lord thy God hath given thee. And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the Lord thy God hath given thee, in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee : so that the man that is tender among you, and very delicate, his eye shall be evil toward his brother, and toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the remnant of his children which he shall leave : so that he will not give to any of them of the flesh of his children whom he shall eat : because he has nothing left him in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee in all thy gates. The tender and delicate woman among you, which would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eyes shall be evil toward the husband of her bosom, and toward her son, and toward her daughter, and toward her young one that cometh out from between her feet, and toward her children which she shall bear ; for she shall eat them for want of all things secretly in the siege and straitness, wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in thy gates.

EZEK. VI. 11, 12.—Alas for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel ! for they shall fall by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence. He that is far off shall die of the pestilence ; and he that is near shall fall by the sword ; and he that remaineth and is besieged shall die by the famine.

ISA. XXIV. 8. — The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled : for the Lord hath spoken this word.

EZEK. VI. 5.—And I will lay the dead carcasses of the children of Israel before their idols ; and I will scatter your bones round about your altars.

JER. XXVI. 18.—Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest.

EZEK. VII. 7-9.—The morning is come unto thee, O thou that dwellest in the land : the time is come, the day of trouble is near, and

not the sounding again of the mountains. Now will I shortly pour out my fury upon thee, and accomplish mine anger upon thee : and I will judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompense thee for all thine abominations. And mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity : I will recompense thee according to thy ways and thine abominations that are in the midst of thee ; and ye shall know that I am the Lord that smiteth. Ver. 15. The sword is without, and the pestilence and the famine within : he that is in the field shall die with the sword ; and he that is in the city, famine and pestilence shall devour him.

ISA. LXIV. 10.—Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned up with fire : and all our pleasant things are laid waste.

JER. IX. 11.—And I will make Jerusalem heaps, and a den of dragons ; and I will make the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant.

JER. XXX. 18.—The city shall be builded upon her own heap.

LUKE XIX. 41-44.—And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace ! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee ; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another ; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

MARK XIII. 1.—And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here ! And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings ? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

A. Stop. I object to your quoting another word from the New Testament, whatever you do with the Old, and for this very obvious reason, that you are again trying to infringe the conditions on which our discussion proceeds. While granting that the Old Testament was in existence before the destruction of Jerusalem, and that it has since been jealously preserved from corruption, neither you nor any man can prove that the New Testament has not been adulterated. Besides this, you know very well that at

the same time that Christ predicted the fall of Jerusalem he predicted that the world was to end before the generation whom he addressed had passed away. I think I have you here in a dead lock.

B. The prediction to which you refer has long been a stumbling-block to many ; and I confess that I cannot explain that unfulfilled, or rather, as we read it, contradicted prophecy. You are no doubt aware that some commentators explain the words " this generation," as referring to the Jewish people. Whether this be correct, or whether it may be that the disciples misapprehended the true import of Christ's saying, as we know they sometimes did, I cannot say. That it was the common interpretation, I at once admit, for Gibbon says,—“ It was universally believed that the end of the world and the kingdom of heaven were at hand. The near approach of this event had been predicted by the apostles ; the tradition of it was preserved by their earliest disciples ; and those who understood in their literal sense the discourses of Christ himself, were obliged to expect the second and glorious coming of the Son of Man in the clouds before that generation was totally extinguished which had beheld his humble condition upon earth.” \* One thing, however, I know, and most confidently assert, that this prediction is among the most important and valuable in the whole New Testament, for it has furnished one *incontestible proof* that these Scriptures have never been tampered with, but have been handed down to us just as they were originally penned. No one dare dispute the

\* Gibbon, vol. i. p. 347.

fact that the chroniclers of this prediction lived in the "generation" referred to. Nor can any one doubt, that had there been any doctoring or tampering with the record by any one in after times, to suit it to facts then notorious, this passage would have been the very first to be altered; and the interpolation of even a single word, or the cancelling of a single word, would have made it all square. *The fact that it still remains, in apparently glaring contrast to historical facts, affords the most absolutely conclusive proof of the purity and authenticity of these records that it is possible to conceive.* In fact, I regard this as a providential phenomenon, without which,—for us, living in the nineteenth century, it would be much more difficult than it is, to have any certain assurance of what Christ had said, taught, or done.

UPON THIS APPARENTLY CONTRADICTED PROPHECY, THEN, I BUILD AN IMPREGNABLE ARGUMENT FOR THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES.

A. You have certainly made the most of a very unpromising subject; but the fact remains that your prophecy has failed.

B. I can only answer that, of the two prophecies uttered in the same breath, one has come true and the other has apparently not come true. I say apparently, because when we find that all the other prophecies have come true, I feel warranted in believing that this one will be at last proved true by some explanation which we at present are unable to supply. But you will not dispute that it proves the purity of the record; and that if this passage, of all

others, was not tampered with, we cannot suppose that the rest were.

The proofs which we possess of the supernatural revelation of the Bible are so overwhelming, that I might safely yield the point of the perfectly comprehensive inspiration of the books, and allow (what, however, I do not believe) that this passage is erroneous. Such an admission would not in the least affect the proofs derived from so many other predictions which have been fulfilled.

A. At least you must admit that this is a case of give and take. You prove the purity of the text, or at least render it (as I own you do) most probable; but, at the same time, you throw discredit upon its authoritative quality. Suppose a lawyer were to prove the date of a certain deed by the presence of some flaw, common in the age, which flaw invalidated its whole force, would he not do very much what you have done just now? He would have proved that the deed was really of the antiquity claimed for it; but that it was a bad deed.

B. No. Your illustration goes too far. It should only prove that the deed was not good in that one point; but one flaw, such as this, would not, as you assume, prove that anything else was wrong. Recollect, however, that I believe it is not a real but only an apparent flaw.

I will take next the prediction of the reception of the Gospel by the heathen nations; but before doing so, I wish to quote from Gibbon a remarkable passage as to the Emperor Julian's abortive attempt to rebuild the temple in the year A.D. 363.



"The vain and ambitious mind of Julian might aspire to restore the ancient glory of the temple of Jerusalem. As the Christians were firmly persuaded that a sentence of everlasting destruction had been pronounced against the whole fabric of the Mosaic law, the Imperial sophist would have converted the success of his undertaking into a specious argument against the faith of prophecy, and the truth of revelation."

"At the call of their great deliverer, the Jews, from all the provinces of the empire, assembled on the holy mountain of their fathers; and their insolent triumph alarmed and exasperated the Christian inhabitants of Jerusalem. The desire of rebuilding the temple has, in every age, been the ruling passion of the children of Israel. In this propitious moment the men forgot their avarice, and the women their delicacy; spades and pickaxes of silver were provided by the vanity of the rich, and the rubbish was transported in mantles of silk and purple. Every purse was opened in liberal contributions, every hand claimed a share in the pious labour; and the commands of a great monarch were executed by the enthusiasm of a whole people."

"An earthquake, a whirlwind, and a fiery eruption, which overturned and scattered the new foundations of the temple, are attested, with some variations, by contemporary and respectable evidence. This public event is described by Ambrose, bishop of Milan, in an epistle to the emperor Theodosius, which must provoke the severe animadversion of the Jews; by the eloquent Chrysostom, who might appeal to the memory of the elder part of his con-

gregation at Antioch; and by Gregory Nazianzen, who published his account of the miracle before the expiration of the same year. The last of these writers has boldly declared that this præternatural event was not disputed by the infidels; and his assertion, strange as it may seem, is confirmed by the unexceptionable testimony of Ammianus Marcellinus. The philosophic soldier, who loved the virtues, without adopting the prejudices of his master, has recorded, in his judicious and candid history of his own times, the extraordinary obstacles which interrupted the restoration of the temple of Jerusalem. 'Whilst Alypius, assisted by the governor of the province, urged, with vigour and diligence, the execution of the work, horrible balls of fire, breaking out near the foundations, with frequent and reiterated attacks, rendered the place, from time to time, inaccessible to the scorched and blasted workmen; and the victorious element continuing in this manner, obstinately and resolutely bent, as it were, to drive them to a distance, the undertaking was abandoned.' Such authority should satisfy a believing, and must astonish an incredulous, mind. Yet a philosopher may still require the original evidence of impartial and intelligent spectators. At this important crisis any singular accident of nature would assume the appearance, and produce the effects, of a real prodigy. This glorious deliverance would be speedily improved and magnified by the pious art of the clergy of Jerusalem, and the active credulity of the Christian world; and, at the distance of twenty years, a Roman historian, careless of theological dis-

putes, might adorn his work with the splendid miracle." \*

A. Well, is not Gibbon's explanation a far more probable explanation than your supernatural hypothesis?

B. I am satisfied with the attestation of the *facts*, and willingly make Gibbon and you welcome to the explanation, if you regard it a satisfactory one, for to me it does not seem worth powder and shot, and I will proceed, as proposed, to give some of the predictions as to the "bringing in" of the Gentiles.

### *Bringing in of the Gentiles.*

MICAH IV. 1.—But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob.

JOHN XII. 32.—And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

MATT. XXIV. 14.—And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

MARK XVI. 15.—Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

MATT. XXVIII. 19.—Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them.

REV. XI. 15.—The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

REV. XIV. 6.—And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.

REV. XV. 4.—For all nations shall come and worship before thee.

REV. XVII. 14.—These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings.

ROM. XIV. 11.—As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.

ACTS XXVIII. 28.—Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.

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\* Gibbon, vol. i.

GEN. XXII. 18.—In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.

PS. LXXII. 17.—His name shall endure for ever : his name shall be continued as long as the sun ; and men shall be blessed in him : all nations shall call him blessed.

ISA. XXV. 6.—And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees ; of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory ; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces ; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth : for the Lord hath spoken it.

ISA. XLIX. 6.—It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel : I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth. Thus saith the Lord, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee. Ver. 11. And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted. Behold, these shall come from far : and, lo, these from the north and from the west ; and these from the land of Sinim. Ver. 18. Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold : all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. Ver. 20. The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me : give place to me that I may dwell. Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro ? and who hath brought up these ? Behold, I was left alone ; these, where had they been ? Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people : and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. And kings shall be thy nursing-fathers, and their queens thy nursing-mothers.

JER. XVI. 19.—The Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth.

LUKE XXIV. 47.—That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

ISA. XLII. 1.—Behold my servant, whom I uphold ; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth ; I have put my Spirit upon him : he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. Ver. 4. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth : and the isles shall wait for his law.

ZECH. IX. 10.—He shall speak peace unto the heathen : and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.

HOSEA II. 23.—I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.

HOSEA I. 10.—It shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.

ISA. LII. 10.—All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

ISA. XLV. 22.—Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.

ISA. LII. 15.—So shall he sprinkle many nations.

B. I need hardly prove how largely this prophecy has been fulfilled; but I cannot avoid referring to the following lists of the relative numbers of different faiths, from Berghaus, and Keith Johnston:—

	Per Cent.		Millions.
Buddhists . .	31.2	Christians . .	340
Christians . .	30.7	Mahommedans .	124
Mohammedans .	15.7	Buddhists . .	300
Brahmanists . .	13.4	Brahmins . .	130
Heathens . .	8.7	Other Pagans .	100
Jews . . . .	0.3	Jews . . . .	6

The first calculation is adopted by Max Müller, who says — “As Berghaus does not distinguish the Buddhists in China from the followers of Confucius and Laotse, *the first place on the scale belongs to Christianity*. It is difficult in China to say to what religion a man belongs, as the same person may possess two or three. The emperor himself, after sacrificing according to the ritual of Confucius, visits a Laotse temple, and afterwards bows before an image of Fo (Buddha) in a Buddhist temple.”

Do you admit that this prophecy has been already largely fulfilled?

*A.* I cannot but in fairness admit that it is so. I must add, however, that there is little agreement among those who profess to be Christians. Their creeds are widely different.

*B.* They all at least confess Christ, and profess to follow his example.

I might quote other predictions of Christ and his apostles, but will forbear. I may, however, suggest whether the infallibility claimed the other day for the Pope did not look very like a verification of the prophecies in Thessalonians and the Apocalypse as to the Papacy; and whether the recent adoption of national arbitration in the prospect of war with America did not look very like the beginning of the fulfilment of the old prophecy that men are to beat their pruning-hooks into spears and to learn the art of war no more. But I will content myself with recapitulating my arguments in favour of the Christian system and its transcendent claims to the regard of humanity.

One remarkable feature of the Jewish and Christian system is its professing to be co-extensive with the age of the world, telling us the past, and foretelling the future even till the end of time, or presenting, as Gibbon says in speaking of the Messiah, "from the beginning of the world an uninterrupted series of predictions;"\* or, as Dr. Jamieson, in one of the Baird Lectures, says, these prophecies "are so graphic and minute that they

\* Gibbon, vol. i. p. 336.

may be said to embrace the general history of the world for several centuries."\* The Bible, starting from the Genesis, abounds truly in such predictions, which all must admit, whether they attribute the facts to accidental or to higher causes, have come true. The land and cities of Israel, Ammon, Moab, Idumea, Philistia, Nineveh, Babylon, Tyre, and Egypt, are all now as it was prophesied they should be. Keith's interesting book on the Evidences of Prophecy contains an almost endless chain of proofs of fulfilment. "Volney," says he, "illustrates six predictions in a single sentence, to which he subjoins a reflection, not less confirmatory than them all, of prophetic inspiration.

"I will destroy your high places, and bring your *sanctuaries* unto desolation: The *palaces* shall be forsaken: I will destroy the remnant of the sea coasts: I will make your cities waste; the multitude of the city shall be left, the habitation forsaken: The land shall be utterly spoiled: I will make the land more desolate than the wilderness."†

Volney says, "The *temples* are thrown down; the *palaces* demolished; the *ports* filled up; the *towns* destroyed; and the earth, *stripped of its inhabitants*, seems a *dreary burying-place*.

"Good God! from whence proceed such melancholy revolutions? For what cause is the fortune of these countries so strikingly changed? Why are so many cities destroyed? Why is not that ancient population reproduced and per-

\* *Baird Lectures*, p. 141. Blackwood & Sons, Edinburgh, 1873.

† Keith's *Evidences of Prophecy*, p. 195. Lond. 1859.

petuated? I wandered over the country; I traversed the provinces; I enumerated the kingdoms of Damascus and Idumea, of Jerusalem and Samaria. This Syria, said I to myself, now almost depopulated, then contained a hundred flourishing cities, and abounded with towns, villages, and hamlets. What are become of so many productions of the hands of man? What are become of those ages of abundance and of life?" \*

Again, we have upwards of one hundred predictions of the Messiah and his forerunner,<sup>†</sup> including the time of his coming, the place of his birth, the nature of his work and teaching, his death and sufferings, his resurrection, the destruction of Jerusalem, the dispersion of the Jews among all nations of the earth without a king any longer to rule over them, the alteration of their worship, the cessation of their sacrifices and of their priests, their humiliation in becoming a byword among all nations, their preservation as a distinct nation, their rejection of Christ, and the acceptance of Christianity by the Gentile nations. "The most improbable prophecy in the world," says Dr. M'Caul, "was this which predicted that a Jew, despised by his people, numbered amongst transgressors, cut off out of the land of the living, should nevertheless prolong his days, be the light, of the Gentiles, and God's salvation to the ends of the earth. And yet this is what has been accomplished, and is accom-

\* \* Volney's *Ruins*, chap. xi. p. 8. Translated by Dr. Keith.

† *Aids to Faith*, p. 129.



plishing itself before our eyes.”\* Who will venture to account for all this on any worldly principle? or point to any religion on earth that can produce similar credentials? The fact is, that our modern sceptics are so much taken up with trifling verbal and other criticisms, with discussions about wretched questions as to whether certain books were written by Moses, or Paul, or John, that they have lost sight of the grand phenomena which stand out unchallengeable on the face of the whole historical records. We find, too, that the light given in the earlier times of the Old Testament history became gradually clearer and clearer till the advent of the Messiah. Mr. Bagehot says, “The peculiarity of Judæa—a peculiarity which I do not for a moment pretend that I can explain—is, that the prophetic revelations are, taken as a whole, indisputably improvements—that they contain, as time goes on, at each succeeding epoch higher and better views of religion.” Then, as to the sublime teaching of Jesus, no one can challenge it. His morality is the highest, and the purest, and the fullest, that the world ever saw, and no improvement has or can be made upon it. The New Testament writers narrate their facts without one attempt to extol them, and never indulge in superlative language—nay, do not even employ commendatory adjectives. Theirs is the simplest and least adorned of all historical records, though, according to Carlyle, “the greatest work of literature in the world.” The Bible writers also possess the highest conceivable title to honesty from the

\* *The Bible Handbook*, p. 95. J. Angus, M.R.A.S.

manner in which they have chronicled their own sins. Their candour is indeed something surprising. Look at the wonderful confession in Matthew, then "*all the disciples forsook him and fled;*" or their disputing among themselves as to which of them was the greatest; and their all declaring with Peter that they would not deny Christ. "With sublime disregard of consequences, the sacred writer has told the truth, and left possible results alone." \*

If Christ was a mythical personage, a purely imaginary character, then he was an ideal creation of a character wholly different from all who had gone before him—a striking anomaly among all his surroundings. And by whom was this personage conceived, and to whom are we indebted for this wondrous portraiture? A few fishermen, belonging to a nation miserably bigoted, and most ignorant in arts, are the persons who have eclipsed the light of all the Grecian and Roman philosophers. Still more incredible is it, that for this falsehood, for this pure myth, those men, and thousands of others, should have been induced to struggle against their own flesh and blood, to give up the world with its pleasures, and to suffer cruel deaths,—all as foretold should happen by their Lord and Master.

I cannot here resist quoting from the posthumous works of the late John Stuart Mill, an extract which, surrounded as it is by matter of a very different kind, may be regarded as all the more precious a tribute to the character of our Lord.

\* *Truth and Life*, p. 295. By Professor Stanley Leathes. Lond. 1872.

"Whatever else may be taken away from us by rational criticism, Christ is still left, a unique figure, not more unlike all his precursors than all his followers, even those who had the direct benefit of his personal teaching. It is of no use to say that Christ, as exhibited in the Gospels, is not historical, and that we know not how much of what is admirable has been superadded by the tradition of his followers. Who among his disciples was capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus, or of imagining the life and character revealed in the Gospels? Certainly not the fishermen of Galilee; as certainly not St. Paul, whose character and idiosyncrasies were of a totally different sort; still less the early Christian writers, in whom nothing is more evident than that the good which was in them was all derived—as they always professed that it was derived—from the higher source. But about the life and sayings of Jesus there is a stamp of personal originality, combined with profundity of insight, which, if we abandon the idle expectation of finding scientific reasoning when something very different was aimed at, must place the Prophet of Nazareth, even in the estimation of those who have no belief in his inspiration, in the very first rank of the men of sublime genius of whom our species can boast."

The kingdom of Christ may be said to include all the civilised nations of the world. Celsus contemptuously called Christ the "Galileæan man," and Tacitus calls Christianity "a new and impious superstition," and Suetonius "a pernicious

superstition, repressed for a time, but which broke out again." Yes; this impious and pernicious superstition, due to the Galilæan man, has been too strong for the proud Romans. It claims for itself in the future, no less than complete supremacy over the nations, and has already become universal among the civilised, as well as the religion which numbers more followers than any other creed in the world. Who will show me a better tool for breaking up the fallow ground of paganism, heathenism, and the lapsed masses? And who are they who are, at the present time, doing the world's work, and proving themselves the true disciples of humanity? Not your talkers, nor your curious critics, nor your learned sceptical philosophers, who deal more in sentiment and hypotheses than in true earnest practical efforts for good. As I have already said, it is your missionary men and women, who, often without any, and always without adequate remuneration, are doing the world's real work.

These are the men and women who have smoothed the pillows of the sick, raised up the fallen, instructed the ignorant, broken the chains of slavery, and who have whispered in the ear of the dying that Jesus is the resurrection and the life; and it is they who are sent for, when sickness is present and death is at hand. And what shall we say of the philanthropy of those writers, so prevalent in our times, who do nothing practical themselves for sick and suffering humanity, but who labour day and night to bring into disrepute what has certainly proved to be the best and kindest, if not the only

efficient, agent that has as yet interposed on behalf of this world's woes? Are not such men "blind leaders of the blind"? Would you cancel all this noble Christian work, and substitute a wretched counterfeit? The results of such a change are well expressed by the Bishop of Gloucester,\*—"Vice will borrow its excuses from scepticism, lawlessness of act will become the natural sequel of lawlessness of thought, and the end will be, no noble, colossal, heavenward-looking ideal man, but a grovelling satyr, the slave of his own appetites, and the vassal of his own abominations." And here I will add a word as to the genuine morality of Christians, as opposed to the spurious morality of optimists. In order to formulate genuine morality we must know something more than a man's place in the moral scale. We must, as in physical questions, also take into account the number and amount of the resistances which have been overcome.

Then at the balance let's be mute,  
We never can adjust it;  
What's done we partly may compute,  
But know not what's resisted.

*Burns.*

Though a man may be rigidly temperate, yet it is quite possible that in being so he overcomes no obstruction. It may be far easier for him, owing to physical idiosyncrasy, to keep sober than to get drunk. So that such a man has nothing truly moral to boast of. He has pursued *the line of least resistance*, i.e., he has followed his own humour. There is a small class of men in every age who thus

\* *Aids to Faith*, p. 377.

successfully avoid what are known as the grosser forms of vice, but who, in following such a course, are doing no real moral work at all. Some of these, doubtless, are the men who make high claims to regard, as examples of good lives that flow not from Christian principle but simply from a noble desire to elevate humanity, and to cultivate morality for morality's sake. Such men, having weak animal propensities, know little of the trials of the great bulk of mankind. They never visit the dens of crime and infamy, to act as missionaries to the lapsed masses. They would soon find, were they to make such an attempt, that something more is wanted in order to reclaim the drunkard or the harlot than to preach the doctrine of human perfectibility, or the principles of a mere cold morality, or to inculcate the fulfilment of what they call the law of man's being. They have, in fact, nothing in sympathy with those who are struggling against flesh and blood. They are ignorant of the real necessities of ordinary human nature, to which they themselves have been exceptions from the day of their birth.

I cannot remember having ever heard of those who were the victims of strong evil passions having been reformed by any agency excepting that of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Such persons, be it remembered, have seldom if ever fallen through ignorance of the moral law, and they require, therefore, not the reiteration of what they already know full well, nor the preaching of human perfectibility, but the message of pardon to their burdened consciences, which your mere moralists cannot and do not pretend to

communicate. "Christianity," says Mr. Mitchell of South Leith, "never met a nation so civilised as to be beyond its need, or so degraded as to be beneath its influence. *Christ and him crucified is the very life of our ministry.* Without this we are powerless as a soldier without arms; bewildered as a pilot without a compass; and useless as a candlestick without a candle."\*

A. You have made out a very fair case on your side, and Christianity may be all very well for those who can embrace it, but it rests upon a foundation which I cannot accept—viz. substitutionary atonement. This doctrine cannot be true. It seems to me unworthy of God, for it is simply not just; and the same may be said of eternal punishments, God's repenting, the thaumaturgy in the Bible, and the like. I quite agree with what many writers have said of the too anthropomorphic view of God's character which is given in the Scriptures.

B. Only think how inconsistent you and your sceptical friends are! In the same breath you condemn the Bible because it makes God too anthropomorphic as regard's man's salvation, and because it makes him not anthropomorphic enough as regards man's punishments! You have no difficulty—though admitting you know nothing of what God's thoughts are—in laying down absolute rules as to how he ought to act about future punishments!

But next, regarding your difficulties about the atonement. Most infidels, no doubt, ridicule the

\* Ordination Sermon to Indian Missionaries, by Rev. James Mitchell, Minister of South Leith Parish: 1874.

principle of Christ's vicarious sufferings. The very notion of an atonement is in their view absurd. Why should it be thought so? Atonements on the same principle are very common in the world, and are always spoken of with respect. I pay a man's debts for the sake of himself and his family, and all commend me for my disinterested conduct. One of God's eternal laws, according to revelation, is, that sin shall not go unpunished, and there is surely an analogy in human laws to render this comprehensible. Now, if God, out of his love towards us, takes the penalty on himself, why should we affect to condemn the act as absurd and unjust? As we have already admitted, there is no action of ours, even that which proceeds from apparent Christian motive, of which it may not be said that, in some sense, it proceeds from selfishness, because we fear the horrors of a world to come for bad deeds, or expect rewards hereafter for good; and even in cases where our good deeds are truly Christian, and flow simply from the higher feelings of gratitude to Christ, and love to man; where, in short, we do more than, as Christ says, "do good to them that do good to us;" still, in the keeping of God's commandments there is, even in this world, great gain. There was only one action in all the world which was purely unselfish, and that was the sacrifice of Christ, who was God himself. In no possible sense could it be said that he suffered and died for the love of suffering or dying, or in the expectation that we, for whom he died, should repay the debt. The motive was pure as the driven snow, it was love absolutely



unalloyed. It was the greatest and the grandest and the purest act of self-negation that the world ever saw, and yet the world scoffs. The whole object of his ministry was to teach that God was a God of justice and of love, and to inculcate among men humility, and love to God and to each other. That was his mission, and the grand and crowning copestone of the whole was his last heroic act of humiliation and self-sacrifice on the cross. His teaching would have been incomplete without his practice, and so, to crown all, he who was King of kings, and Lord of lords, gave up his life *for us* on the cross, between two thieves.

All our independent reasonings end, as we have seen, in selfishness; whereas Christianity leads us precisely in the opposite direction, and the whole system is crowned by its teacher sacrificing himself for us. The ravings, and so-called arguments, of infidels, as to God's injustice in the atonement, *will apply with tenfold force to all and every unselfish act of man*. If the one be absurd and unjust, so are the others. If you condemn the vicarious sufferings of Christ, you condemn unselfishness everywhere. But our philosophising sceptics and materialists dare not go this length. They cling tenaciously to Christ's morality, for the world will not approve of any other, and cannot improve by means of any other. Canon Norris, in preaching before the Social Science Association in 1870, remarked,—"There are four guiding principles to be gathered from the Sacred Book: 1st, That man's body is a sacred thing—an inspiring and suggestive thought for sanitary matters. 2d,

That crime is surest destroyed when the criminal is redeemed—the principle of all reformatory effort. 3*d*, That children are not ours in fee, but ours in trust for their highest welfare—a Christian axiom that ought to govern all schemes of education. 4*th*, That man is bound to man in equal fellowship—the foundation, surely, of all law between man and woman, between employers and employed, between nation and nation.”

For my own part, I respect more a less perfect morality than that, for example, of Mr. J. S. Mill, which abounds with self-glory. His is a borrowed morality, and there is a fly in the apothecary's ointment, which spoils all. Far truer, far nobler, far grander to my mind, is the morality of a weaker man, and one influenced by stronger and more irregular passions, who, though sometimes falling, it may be, into angry feelings or other sins, is notwithstanding humbly striving, from love to Christ, to grapple with the evil that is within him, and with the temptations that are around him. In both cases there may be self-negation; but in the one we have vainglorious pride, and in the other true humility and abasement of heart. Which character is the grander and nobler? A man is judged according to what he hath, not according to what he hath not; and the consciences of the best men, when enlightened by Christianity, tell them, that after all they are but unprofitable servants.

A. The case of one man's paying another's debt is not to the point. The true parallel would be, that of one man choosing to be hung for a murder which was committed by another, a course which no human

laws would suffer, for it would be punishing the innocent and letting free the guilty.

*B.* If you take up that ground, then you would hopelessly condemn all, unless you adopt the principle that all should go free whatever sins they have committed, which is opposed to all human laws, and which would make God the direct approver and abettor of sin. When a son, in flagrant violation of repeated injunctions from his father not to steal fruit from a neighbour's orchard, takes advantage of a boat to go across the river to the orchard, and the boat capsizes, would this father be blamed for attempting to save his son from the dangerous consequences resulting from his sin, even although he should risk his own life in the attempt? Is not this saving the guilty from the penalty of his guilt, and is not the father himself paying the penalty of his son's guilt?

*A.* True; but you forget that the alleged penalty, in our case, is out of all proportion to the guilt.

*B.* You or I, imperfect and degraded human beings, labouring under the curse of a darkened and hardened conscience, cannot judge of the extent of God's hatred of sin, or of the penalty which he considers to be due to any one sin, however apparently small in our eyes. We cannot judge of God, seeing that, apart from Revelation, which you discard, we know nothing whatever about him. We, who have been so far enlightened by a knowledge of Christianity, look upon certain acts as desperately sinful, unjust, and cruel, which savages brandishing scalping knives would consider to be no sin at all. It

surely need not astonish us, therefore, if God has far higher and purer notions as to the guilt of an infraction of his moral laws than we, and has appointed far heavier penalties for such actions than we should think right.

*A.* I still cannot see that one man can in any way atone for another. Though the father averted the penal consequences of his son's action, the guilt of the sin would still lie on the son.

*B.* Be it so. Then, if there be any difference between good and evil, and if the last deserves punishment, there is nothing for it but that we must all suffer the full penalty of our guilt; and when we see, even in this world, the fearful pains attaching to disease, and to the accidents to which the human frame is subject, as also the unknown horrors of death, all of which we see God permits, we have certainly every reason to tremble for what may probably await us after death. Why, then, in the name of common prudence, not to say of common sense, should we carp at the method of reconciliation which God declares to be the only one available, and which, be it observed, may be, after all, the one thing needful; for, if we cannot prove that it is so, certainly much less can we disprove it. If it should turn out at last to be true, what then?

*A.* I cannot believe what I choose. I can only believe what I feel to be true.

*B.* Well, be sure that you act as a true free-thinker, and do not allow your preconceived notions to fetter the free action of your understanding as to a God of whom, apart from Scripture, you know

nothing, excepting His permission of pain and death as well as of pleasure.

*A.* May I not retort the same remark on you?

*B.* Certainly you may; but surely you should keep very prominently in your view the peril which is alleged to attach to unbelief; and I earnestly trust that you will at least carefully reconsider the whole matter.

*A.* I cannot object to your advice, as I grant that the question is one of undoubted importance; but I object to your manner of influencing me. It puts me in mind of the story of the virtuoso who requested a friend's judgment of a picture in the following terms:—"The last man who denied that this was an original Raphael I shot dead. Now give me your candid opinion."

*B.* I can say no more. I have at least given you a friendly advice. Let me ask you, what sort of enjoyment you can have in this world, if the future is all dark and uncertain?

*A.* I will, instead of giving my own language in answer to your question, adopt the far better words of Mr. Morley, whom you have already quoted:—

"Above all, it is monstrous to suppose that because a man does not accept your synthesis, he is therefore a being without a positive creed or a coherent body of belief capable of guiding and inspiring conduct.

"There are new solutions for him, if the old are fallen dumb. If he no longer believes death to be a stroke from the sword of God's justice, but the leaden footfall of an inflexible law of matter, the

humility of his awe is deepened, and the tenderness of his pity made holier, that creatures who can love so much should have their days so shut round with a wall of darkness. The purifying anguish of remorse will be stronger, not weaker, when he has trained himself to look upon every wrong in thought, every duty omitted from act, each infringement of the inner spiritual law which humanity is constantly perfecting for its own guidance and advantage, less as a breach of the decrees of an unseen tribunal, than as an ungrateful infection, weakening and corrupting the future of his brothers; and he will be less effectually raised from inmost prostration of soul by a doubtful subjective reconciliation, so meanly comfortable to his own individuality, than by hearing full in the ear, the sound of the cry of humanity craving sleepless succour from her children. That swelling consciousness of height and freedom with which the old legends of an omnipotent divine majesty fill the breast, may still remain, for how shall the universe ever cease to be a sovereign wonder of overwhelming power and superhuman fixedness of law? And a man will be already in no mean paradise, if at the hour of sunset a good hope can fall upon him like harmonies of music, that the earth shall still be fair, and the happiness of every feeling creature still receive a constant augmentation, and each good cause yet find worthy defenders, when the memory of his own poor name and personality has long been blotted out of the brief recollection of men for ever."

*B.* I beg to state that what Mr. Morley calls no mean paradise I call a fool's paradise. It amounts

to this, that it would be a satisfactory consolation to a man who was mourning for a lost child, to tell him that many other fathers had still their families alive and well. If shipwrecked sailors were starving on an unapproachable rock in the sea, how would they feel were some one on the shore to bawl, through a speaking trumpet, that though they must all soon die of starvation, they cannot but be consoled to hear that the people on the shore had plenty of roast beef and plum pudding? Would this be anything better than a cruel mockery? Or, to take a case more strictly analogous. Suppose a ship were to spring a leak in mid-ocean, and that one of the passengers, who was a minister of the negation creed, stood up on the deck, and attempted to console his fellow voyagers by telling them, that although, in a very few minutes, the ship would go down, it was still delightful to think that, long after their bones were whitening in the bottom of the sea, very many people would sail over the same place in perfect safety and happiness! Would the people who were about to perish with himself regard him as any better than a drivelling idiot? It may be that he expressed a beautiful sentiment, but it was a sentiment utterly out of place and wholly irrational, because inadequate to the exigencies of the case. Had he been able to emit a single ray of hope, personal to those in distress, the case would have been wholly different. Had he, for instance, said, You *must* go down with the ship; but keep your mouths shut, and you will come up again to the surface, and a ship which is not far from us will pick

us all up in safety,—that would have been a very different aspect of the case. Such an announcement would have been, in one respect, like the Gospel-message of the Rev. Morell Mackenzie on the deck of the sinking “Pegasus,” off the Fern Islands; or of the bishop and the minister on board of the sinking steamer “London.” Their consolation was, You *must* go down with the ship; but, if you are believers in Christ, you will pass into another and a better world than this, in which there is no more pain, or separation, or death. The one message is intelligible and full of consolation, the other is idle trifling, which, I make bold to say, no man in his senses ever yet was guilty of, in circumstances so awful as those of a ship foundering in the ocean.

Mr. Morley’s philosophy, then, is utterly inadequate to meet the wants of humanity. His suggestions may be regarded as specimens of wondrously fine and exalted optimistic sentimentality, but they are not consolations worthy of the name; and to all those who preach such philosophy, poor suffering humanity will indignantly exclaim,—“Miserable comforters are ye all.”

I suppose we are now both at the end of our tether, and I will conclude, as you have done, by quoting a pre-eminently fine passage from Mr. Morley, in which, I think, he far more than neutralises the other one with which you favoured me:—

“Let us see, shortly, what was Voltaire’s own solution of those facts of life with which religion has to deal. The Catholic solution we know, and can



definitely analyse and describe, but the vagueness of Voltairean deism defies any attempt at detailed examination. We can perceive a supernatural existence, endowed with indefinable attributes, which are fixed subjectively in the individual consciousness of each believer, and which, therefore, can never be set forth in a scheme of general acceptance. The Voltairean deist, and such persons exist in ample numbers even to this day, hardly ever takes the trouble to reconcile with one another the various attributes which he imputes at various times to some great master power of the universe. There is hardly one of these attributes to which, when it comes to be definitely described, he does not encounter affronting contradiction in the real occurrences that arise from time to time to search and try all theories, deistical or other. The phenomena of moral and physical evil on the earth, and the arrival of disasters which make no discrimination between their victims, are constantly dealing sore blows to the conceptions which the Deist loves to erect in moments of optimistic expansion, of the clemency, justice, and illimitable power, of a being who governs the universe, and is a something outside and independent of it. These optimist conceptions, vague, unverified, free of definite relations with any moral or social system, and furnishing no principle of active human association as the Catholic idea of deity had done, constitute the favourite religion or religiosity of those classes, in all modern countries, which have found the Voltairean kind of objection to the Christian revelation insuperable, and which are so fortunate as to enjoy

a full measure of material prosperity. To these classes the black side of life is strange and a matter of hearsay, and hence the awkwardness of reconciling their complacent theory with the horror of facts is never forced upon them. In their own happiness they love to superadd the luxury of thankfulness to the bounty of a being to whom they owe all, and to swell the tide of their own emotions by meditation on his infinite and unspeakable perfections. Proof they require none, beyond the loveliness and variety of external nature, the innocence and delight of all young creatures, the order of the seasons, bearing us their copious fruit, the vivid intelligence and serviceable power of man, who is the divinely appointed recipient of all these multitudinous favours. Hence, in proportion as this sort of deism stirs the soul of a man, the more closely are his inmost thoughts reserved for contemplation of the relations between the supreme being and his own individuality. It is a creed which is specially adapted for, and has been generally seized by, those with whom the world has gone very well, owing to their own laudable exertion, and who are inclined to believe that the existing ordering of society is fundamentally the best possible. It is the superlative decoration of optimism.

“ The mass of men, those who dwell in dens and whose lives are bitter, have never, in spite even of Rousseau's teaching, accepted deism. An opportunity for trying the experiment had occurred in the fourth century, and the lesson should not be forgotten. Deism had been the prevailing opinion in religion,

but, as the most instructive of all the historians of the dissolution of the Empire observes, it was generally felt that deism did not supply the void occasioned by the absence of the multitude of sympathetic divinities of the pagan system. Its influence was cold and inanimate.\* The common people are wont to crave a revelation, or else they find atheism a rather better synthesis than any other. They either cling to the miraculously transmitted message, with its hopes of recompense, and its daily communication of the divine voice in prayer or sacrament, or else they make a world which moves through space as a black monstrous ship with no steersman. The bare deistic idea, of a being endowed at once with sovereign power and sovereign clemency, with might that cannot be resisted, and justice that cannot be impugned, who loves man with infinite tenderness, yet sends him no word of comfort, and gives him no way of deliverance, is too hard a thing for those who have to endure the hardships of the brutes but yet preserve the intelligence of men.

“ A bald deism has undoubtedly been the creed of some of the purest and most generous men that have ever trod the earth, but none the less on that account is it in its essence a doctrine of self-complacent individualism, from which society has little to hope, and with which there is little chance of the bulk of society ever sympathising. In truth, one can scarcely call it a creed. It is merely a name for a particular

\* Finlay's *Greece under the Romans* (B.C. 146—A.D. 716), pp. 146-7.

mood of fine spiritual exaltation ; the expression of a state of indefinite aspiration and supreme feeling for lofty things. Are you going to convert the new barbarians of our western world with this fair word of emptiness ? Will you sweeten the lives of suffering men, and take its heaviness from that droning piteous chronicle of wrong and cruelty and despair, which everlastingly saddens the compassionating ear like moaning of a midnight sea ? Will you animate the stout of heart with new fire, and the firm of hand with fresh joy of battle, by the thought of a being without intelligible attributes, a mere abstract creation of metaphysics, whose mercy is not as our mercy, his justice as our justice, nor his fatherhood as the fatherhood of men ? It was not by a cold, a cheerless, a radically depraving conception such as this, that the Church became the refuge of humanity in the dark times of old, but by the representation, to men sitting in bondage and confusion, of godlike natures moving among them under figure of the most eternally touching of human relations,—a tender mother ever interceding for them, and an elder brother laying down his life that their burdens might be loosened.”

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“*Eruditi hominis attente audire,  
Ac pendere momenta rerum.*”

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